WAR ECHOES

BY

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THE BATTLE OF ATBARA, APRIL 8, 1898.

"BRITISH victory in the Soudan?"

"The enemy clung obstinately to the trenches, and were bayonetted in them."

"Nothing could have been finer than the behavior of the troops."

Nothing finer indeed!

White Christian soldiers three thousand miles from home, in the pay of white Christian bond-holders, bayonetting black Mohammedans for defending their native land, and setting the example of bloodshed to brown Mohammedans whom they had already trained to slaughter!

Good God, is it too much to hope that the day may come when every sane man will shrink from running a bayonet into a fellow-creature, as he would now shrink from torturing a baby?

We look back with pity, contempt and detestation on the times of the rack and wheel and fagot, we who are still in the thick of the Dark Ages ourselves!

A ten-fold better man is the true Mussulman dervish fighting for his home, than one of these Christian hypocrites emphasizing their barbarian butcheries with chaplains and crosses and Te Deums and every kind of shameless lie and blasphemy.

WOMAN AND WAR.

I SAW a lamb gnashing its untried teeth,
Rending the fleece
Of its own brother, piece by piece,
Until beneath
Blood trickled red upon the heath,
And stained the mouth of that perverted lamb—
That mouth not made to frighten,
But rather to whiten
With the innocent milk of its dam.

I heard a bobolink in June
Forget its limpid tune,
And choose the shriek and angry talk
Of a carrion hawk;
And I saw it swooping, mad, relentless, down,
Where in a tuft of long couch-grass
Lay an unprotected nest,
Hidden from those who pass,
But, on its unnatural quest,
Spied from above as a spot of brown
By this unexpected pest.

"O God," I cried, "What ails the universe?
What hell-born curse
Has stirred these gentle hearts to strike?
What anti-natural taint
Makes devil and saint
In cruelty and hate alike?"

God did not answer ; yet He was not dumb.
He only said :
" The worst is still to come."
And then I seemed to see
With eyes of dread
A sight most monstrous and unwarranted.
For there appeared to me,
Sadder than ought that I beheld before,
(Oh, blasphemy !)
A woman urging men to war—
(Ah, that such things should be !)
A pure-browed maiden urging men to war !

THE TIGER.

DOWN with the tiger in each of us!

He has his proper place, no doubt, in the economy of nature, but it is in the depths of our own private bottomless pit.

There he growls and mutters as he chafes behind the bars.

If we could kill him, we should straightway fly into atoms, and if war and lust and hatred open the grating and let him spring to the surface he is sure to turn the world upside down.

There is only one safe course to pursue: lock him up firmly and securely, and pay no heed to his subterranean roar.

MY WAR.

I AM a soldier too, and I have the battle of battles on my hands.

You little warriors who, while fighting each other, are yet at heart agreed and see the same false life with the same distorted eyes,

I have to make war upon all of you combined, and upon the infernal War Spirit which inspires you in the bargain.

I set my courage against your courage.

It is fine not to flinch under fire.

It is also fine to tell an unwelcome truth to a mob and to call you the mad lot of murderers that you are.

It is war between us to the knife, and I will not tell you how well I love you until you are shamed into unconditional surrender.

Then I will show you my commission, and you will see that it is signed by a Commander-in-chief who may wait long for victory but never waits in vain.

THE NEW FREEDOM.

I.

AMERICANS, you once were free—
Free as the broad prairie and the forest profound,
And then you led the world.
After your Revolution your example fired France and France set Europe aflame.
Without battalions or men of war you were in the van of nations.
A mere handful, living in straggling hamlets along a thousand miles of narrow seaboard,
Without arms you were invincible,
Without a fortress you were invulnerable,
Your strength was your freedom.

II.

Times change and freedom changes with them,
For freedom must from age to age be born again.
The political liberty of Seventy-six, the equality before the law, of which you talk so much, is no longer the living ideal that it was;
It is now a fossil for antiquaries to toy with.
Will you play with it in the rear while the nations go marching on?

III.

Think you to lead again by dint of armies and navies and coast defenses?
Not so is the world mastered.

Spread your frontiers; take Cuba and Hawaii; beguile Canada if you can; push on over the great Southern hemisphere;
Will those lands be yours?
There is only one possession in them worth the capturing and that is the hearts of men,
And these hearts can never be won by a nation of slaves.
Be free and all mankind will flock to your standard.

IV.

While you talk of freedom, do you not feel the fetters that are fastening on your limbs?
While you hurrah, are you unconscious of the burden which you are bearing?
Are you never weary of the endless task?
Can you still be cheered by the devilish dream of becoming task-masters in your turn?
Up, and to death with the tyrant!
Let there be no half measures; he must be torn from his insolent throne.
Show him no quarter; plunge the dagger in deep again and again; let him welter in his blood.

V.

There, at last you are rising! Where is the oppressor, do you cry?
You will not find him in the streets.
Look for him in your own souls, for the kingdom of hell is within you.
There reigns the greed for gold.

There it is that you are either trampling on your fellow men or longing to be numbered with the tramplers.

There it is that your rebellion, your revolution, must begin.

Set yourselves free ; away with the usurper ; enthrone in his stead the new ideal, the equal freedom in love of all mankind, liberty and union, one and inseparable.

Yes ; establish first the kingdom of heaven there and all things shall be added unto you.

PEACE.

PEACE, O Peace, when will the nation
Lift its eyes and understand
How thou holdest all creation
In the hollow of thy hand?

Thine the strength that stays the ocean
Hypnotized within its bed;
Thine the power that keeps in motion
Constellations overhead;

Thine the orb of love a-fire,
Lighting up the heavens profound;
Thine the suns that never tire
Swinging planets round and round;

Thine the furnaces white-heated,
Where they forge the cosmic powers—
Where the sons of God once greeted
This new-fashioned earth of ours;

Thine the strength, serene, unshaken,
Which can master self alone,
Quelling passions when they waken,
From thy calm, eternal throne.

Insult, hatred, cannot reach thee
At that still, majestic height.
Make us, like thee, we beseech thee,
Conscious of reserves of might.

Teach us, while the battle rages,
What we never understood—
This, the mystery of the ages,
Evil overcome by good.

Far above the storms and thunders,
Far above the war and strife,
Far above our sins and blunders,
At the source of strength and life—

There I see thy hand commanding
With the olive branch for rod,
Peace, that passest understanding!
Spirit of Almighty God!